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From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Fri 3/11/2016 2:54:32 PM
Subject: Region 2News Clips (PFOA)

Local governors write letter to EPA demanding a regulatory PFOA level

By Lindsay Nielsen

March 10, 2016, 6:06 pm

HOOSICK FALLS, NY (NEWS10) – There is an advisory level for PFOA. It's 400 PPT for the federal level except in an EPA region to where it was lowered to 100 PPT. There is still no regulatory level and officials want that to change.

"I think it's probably going to be probably more like six months," said Carolyn Weatherwax of Hoosick Falls.

Carolyn Weatherwax said she wasn't surprised to learn Thursday that it will be at the least two more weeks before testing is completed to determine if the temporary filtration system in Hoosick Falls is working to reduce the level of PFOA contamination in water.

She said she does not have trust in local or state officials after emails showed officials knew of contamination before people were told by the EPA not to drink the water.

"Why weren't you disclosing it? That's your public duty," said Weatherwax.

The Rensselaer County Health Department said there's a reason. They said a lack of regulatory standard from state or the federal government made it extremely difficult to determine how to achieve safe water and how to advise people to reduce potential health effects.

In an email in October of 2014 that discussed Hoosick Falls PFOA results, an employee of the Rensselaer County Health Department said to an employee of the State Health Department quote "From talking with the mayor this may become a very public issue once they release these and since they are above the only guidance we have (even though it is not regulated) it may get messy".

"Oh it's going to get messy. It's going to get messy," said Weatherwax.

Thursday in a letter to the EPA from Governor Cuomo, Vermont Governor Shumlin, and New Hampshire Governor Hassan it reads quote:

"We urge the EPA, under your leadership, to expeditiously review the best available

science on this contaminant, and provide uniform guidance to states that our health and environmental officials can use in assessing the safety of our drinking water”.

“If you don’t have the information you can’t make an informed decision and that’s not anybody else’s right to take that away from you,” said Weatherwax.

This is the letter from Governors Cuomo, Shumlin, and Hassan r to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy:

“It is clear that PFOA contamination is not a state problem or a regional problem. It’s a national problem that requires federal guidelines and a consistent, science-based approach”.

Here is the EPA’s response to the letter:

“The EPA has received and will review and respond to the letter appropriately”.

3 Governors Ask EPA for Review After Chemical Found in Water

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MARCH 10, 2016

CONCORD, N.H. — The governors of New Hampshire, New York and Vermont are urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to review and issue new safe drinking water guidelines regarding an emerging contaminant that's shown up in water systems and in private wells.

They wrote to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy on Thursday asking for a review of the best available science regarding PFOA. It's part of a family of chemicals used to make nonstick cookware and stain-resistant carpeting.

Last month, Honeywell International and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics were sued in New York. Regulators identified them as potentially responsible for chemical contamination in Hoosick Falls' water.

Saint-Gobain last owned the now-closed ChemFab plant in southwestern Vermont. It's been providing bottled water to residents since PFOA was found in North Bennington. It also found PFOA in samples in Merrimack, New Hampshire.

Times Union

Governors ask EPA for 'uniform guidance' on PFOA

Cuomo joins leaders of New Hampshire, Vermont

By Casey Seiler

Published 10:38 pm, Thursday, March 10, 2016

Albany

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday joined his fellow state executives Peter Shumlin of Vermont and Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire in formally asking the Environmental Protection Agency to "conduct a review of the best available science regarding perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), in order to assess and ensure the safety of drinking water exposed to the contaminant."

"It is clear that PFOA contamination is not a state problem or a regional problem — it's a national problem that requires federal guidelines and a consistent, science-based approach," said the letter, addressed to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy.

PFOA, used in the production of non-stick cookware, is the contaminant that has been at the center of the water crises in the Rensselaer County communities of Hoosick Falls and Petersburg as well as North Bennington, Vt., and Merrimack, N.H. Exposure to PFOA has been linked to a number of human maladies, including several forms of cancer.

In Hoosick Falls, the EPA's regional office in January set 100 parts per trillion as the safe level for the sort of long-term exposure found in residential use. Nationally, EPA has set 400 ppt as the safe level for short-term exposure.

The governors complained the less stringent limit remains in effect for the rest of the nation. "We urge the EPA ... to expeditiously review the best available science on this contaminant, and provide uniform guidance to states that our health and environmental officials can use in assessing the safety of our drinking water," they wrote.

Facing criticism of the state's response to the situation in Hoosick Falls, Cuomo and other elected officials have pointed to the fact that PFOA remains unregulated on the federal level, though it is characterized by EPA as an "emerging contaminant." In January, Cuomo's administration declared PFOA to be a regulated substance, a move that allowed the state to designate contaminated areas as Superfund sites.

The governors' letter also asked for full federal funding of the federal Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water Revolving Fund, two pools of money designed to facilitate water infrastructure projects through low- or no-interest loans.

Last year, the EPA rebuffed the Cuomo administration's attempt to allocate more than \$500 million from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to finance elements of the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement, though a little more than \$30 million from the fund was disbursed for a reduced set of bridge-related projects.

An EPA spokesman said the agency "has received and will review and respond to the letter appropriately."

Times Union

Cuomo, two other regional govs call on EPA to set PFOA safe levels

By Casey Seiler, Capitol bureau chief

March 10, 2016

Gov. Andrew Cuomo joined his fellow state executives Peter Shumlin of Vermont and Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire in formally asking the Environmental Protection Agency to “conduct a review of the best available science regarding perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), in order to assess and ensure the safety of drinking water exposed to the contaminant.”

PFOA, used in the production of non-stick cookware, is the contaminant that has been at the center of the water crises in the Rensselaer County communities of Hoosick Falls and Petersburg as well North Bennington, Vt., and Merrimack, N.H.

The same letter asks for full federal funding of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water Revolving Fund. (Regular readers may recall that the EPA rebuffed the Cuomo administration’s attempts to allocate more than \$500 million in low- and no-cost loans from the state’s tributary of that fund to finance the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement.)

The EPA in January set 100 parts per trillion as the safe level for the sort of long-term exposure found in residential use (drinking, bathing, cooking). It had previously set 400 ppt as the safe level for short-term exposure, while advising residents in the affected communities to use bottled water.

The EPA’s regional press office didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

The requests came in a letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy:

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

We write as Governors whose states are all in the midst of addressing local drinking water contamination involving the federally unregulated chemical perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). We are deeply concerned for the health and well-being of our communities grappling with this contaminant. In New York and New Hampshire, tests have indicated the presence of this chemical in public drinking water systems, and in New York and Vermont the chemical has been detected in several private wells. It is clear that PFOA contamination is not a state problem or a regional problem – it’s a national problem that requires federal guidelines and a consistent, science-based approach.

The EPA’s PFOA health advisory was recently lowered in one village in New York by the EPA’s Regional Office, though the higher advisory remains in the rest of the country. We urge the EPA, under your leadership, to expeditiously review the best available science on this contaminant, and provide uniform guidance to states that our health and environmental officials can use in assessing the safety of our drinking water. In addition, we seek your help and support for additional drinking water testing and analysis in communities exposed

to PFOA.

We also are all strong supporters of full federal funding for water infrastructure. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund is a critical tool for states to invest in modern and safe drinking water upgrades. Unfortunately, over the last six years funding for this program, and its companion Clean Water Revolving Fund, have been flat or declining. This comes even as the American Society of Civil Engineers points out massive gaps between our water infrastructure needs and our investment. We should invest more in both the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water Revolving Fund, and we look forward to working with you to make that happen.

We respectfully request your personal attention to the challenges created by PFOA contamination in our states. Consistency, accuracy, and uniformity are paramount. We look forward to your response and assistance as we work to identify the polluters responsible for this contamination, and hold them accountable for their actions. It is unacceptable to us that any community should have to be concerned about the safety of their drinking water. Families in our states are worried about potentially tragic short and long-term health impacts, not to mention the potential loss in property values for homes in affected areas. It has been our priority to ensure that residents are being provided clean and safe water immediately, and that our infrastructure be modernized to eliminate these concerns in the future.

Thank you,

New Jersey News/AP

Military to check for water contamination at 664 sites

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT

Mar. 10, 2016 6:12 pm

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP)

The military plans to examine hundreds of sites nationwide to determine whether chemicals from foam used to fight fires have contaminated groundwater and spread to drinking water, the Defense Department said.

The checks are planned for 664 sites where the military has conducted fire or crash training, military officials told The Associated Press this week.

Since December, tests have been carried out at 28 naval sites in mostly coastal areas. Drinking water at a landing field in Virginia and the groundwater at another site in New Jersey have been found to contain levels above the guidance given by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Navy said. Results of the other tests have either come up under federally acceptable levels or are pending.

The Navy is giving bottled water to its personnel at the Naval Auxiliary Landing Field

Fentress in Chesapeake, Virginia, and is testing wells in a nearby rural area after the discovery of perfluorinated chemicals in drinking water, which the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry says may be associated with prostate, kidney and testicular cancer, along with other health issues.

The Navy found perfluorinated chemicals in the groundwater monitoring wells at Naval Weapons Station Earle in Colts Neck, New Jersey, but not in the drinking water supply. Test results from off-base drinking water wells are expected this month.

And several congressmen are raising concerns about the safety of drinking water near two former Navy bases in suburban Philadelphia. The lawmakers say firefighting foams might be the source of chemicals found in nearly 100 public and private wells near the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove and the Naval Air Warfare Center in Warminster.

The foam is used where potentially catastrophic fuel fires can occur, such as in a plane crash, because it can rapidly extinguish them. It contains perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOS and PFOA, both considered emerging contaminants by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Defense Department said that until foam without perfluorinated chemicals can be certified for military use, it is removing stocks of it in some places and also trying to prevent any uncontrolled releases during training exercises.

The military is beginning to assess the risk to groundwater at the training sites not only to determine the extent of contamination, but also to identify any action the Defense Department needs to take, said Lt. Col. Eric D. Badger, a department spokesman.

California has the most sites, with 85, followed by Texas, with 57, Florida, with 38, and Alaska and South Carolina, each with 26, according to a list provided to the AP. Each state has at least one site.

Knowledge about the chemicals' effects has been evolving, and the EPA does not regulate them. The agency in 2009 issued guidance on the level at which they are considered harmful to health, but it was only an advisory — not a standard that could be legally enforced.

The EPA said then that it was assessing the potential risk from short-term exposure through drinking water. It later began studying the health effects from a lifetime of exposure. Those studies remain in progress.

The Navy started handing out bottled water in January to about 50 people at the contaminated Virginia site, and it worked with the city to set up a water station for concerned property owners after it found perfluorinated chemicals in on-base drinking water wells above the concentrations in the EPA advisory.

The Navy is testing private wells of nearby property owners; those results are due next week.

Chris Evans, of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, credited the Navy with being proactive but said he's concerned anytime there's a potential threat to human health

and the environment.

Some states have established their own drinking water and groundwater guidelines for the maximum allowable concentrations of the chemicals; Virginia uses the EPA's.

"We'll follow EPA's lead as this develops," Evans said.

There's a lot of evolving science around perfluorinated chemicals, said Lawrence Hajna, a spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

"The more that we hear, the more that we realize that this is a very important health concern," he said.

The former Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove and present day Horsham Air Guard Station is shown Thursday, March 10, 2016, in Horsham, Pa. The military is checking whether chemicals from firefighting foam might have contaminated groundwater at hundreds of sites nationwide and potentially tainted drinking water, the Defense Department said. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

The Associated Press

In this Feb. 2, 2016 photo, area residents gather around an aerial photograph of Fentress Naval Auxiliary Landing Field during a meeting at a school, in Chesapeake, Va. The military is beginning to check whether chemicals from its firefighting foam may have contaminated groundwater at hundreds of sites nationwide, according to the Defense Department. The Navy started handing out bottled water in January to people who work at Fentress. (Steve Earley/The Virginian-Pilot via AP) MAGS OUT; MANDATORY CREDIT

The Associated Press

The front of the former Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove and present day Horsham Air Guard Station is photographed, Thursday, March 10, 2016, in Horsham, Pa. The military is checking whether chemicals from firefighting foam might have contaminated groundwater at hundreds of sites nationwide and potentially tainted drinking water, the Defense Department said. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

The Associated Press

WNYT

Filters causing frustrations for people in Town of Hoosick

Anna Meiler

Created: 03/10/2016 11:59 PM

HOOSICK FALLS – The Department of Environmental Conservation installed a filtration

system at Amy Breese's house to reduce the level of PFOA in her water. Dealing with a toxic chemical in her private well has been troubling enough, but she says the problems keep on coming- like black specks in her water.

"You notice it when you flush the toilet or if you unscrew the faucet you can see a bit of the carbon particles," said Breese.

DEC workers came to her house to check out the problem on Wednesday, but told her there's nothing wrong with how her filtration system is set up. They left without making any changes.

"If it's running through the system and it's going to clog the washing machine or the dishwasher that's potentially another expense," she said.

Breese is also worried because the DEC accidentally installed valves at several homes with warning labels attached that say they're illegal to use in the United States for drinking water and contain a chemical known to cause cancer. Amy's valves didn't have a label, but she says DEC workers don't know if they're safe.

"They couldn't give me a definitive answer on whether my valves are okay or not," she said. "He said we're replacing all the valves. When they come on Saturday they're replacing all the valves just in case."

But a spokesperson for the DEC tells NewsChannel 13 that's not true and says they're only replacing the faulty valves.

"We are getting mixed messages," she said.

Breese says the bottom line is people with private wells don't want filters at all. They want a completely new source of water- just like the governor has promised people in the village of Hoosick Falls.

"I think it's imperative for everyone to have clean, healthy water," said Breese.

Breese also says she finds it discouraging that Governor Cuomo hasn't visited the town or village yet.

Governor Cuomo's office tells NewsChannel 13 he will be going soon.

Water contamination stresses taking toll on residents; church program steps up to help

By WRGB Staff Thursday, March 10th 2016

HOOSICK FALLS - A local church group is stepping forward to help those dealing with the water crisis in Hoosick Falls.

It has been months now since the people who live in the Rensselaer County village were told not to drink the water. A chemical called PFOA, which is linked to cancer and other health issues, was found in dangerous levels in the village water supply.

Since that time, living in Hoosick Falls with no drinkable running water has become hectic, especially for the Allen family.

"We don't bathe as often. Not even close to what we use to do," Heather Allen said.

Allen heats up bottled water to wash little faces and for brushing teeth she created a contraption using a cooler with a spigot and a bowl to make sure her four young kids remember not to use the tap. Usually it is she and her husband who forget.

"You'll hear us brushing our teeth and, 'Ah! Did you do it again?' 'I did it again.'"

Allen laughs now but she admits the contamination has taken away precious time and added stress to every single day.

"At first it was devastating but I try to remember there are people all over the world that have water that makes them sick and they don't have a choice," Allen said.

The constant mental and emotional strains in Hoosick Falls are something church goers are silently praying about but Bob Woodward and Sandy Dooley, who both are ministry leaders of a faith-based support group, wanted to make sure people could be heard by their neighbors, if they want to.

"That's why we wanted to let people know, not everybody knows, we're here," Dooley said.

Every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. the faith-based 12-step program Celebrate Recovery meets at the Hoosick Falls Community Alliance Church and its members listen.

"Alcohol, co-dependency, low self esteem, addictions," Woodward said.

The two ministry leaders say the stresses from the water crisis is the newest issue they are here to help with. They say Celebrate Recovery is there to support anyone who wants to come and talk or just observe.

"We will get through this. We're a strong community. We're strong people so we can get through this, it's just going to be one step at a time," Dooley said.

The weekly meetings are held in the church sanctuary and are completely anonymous, so people can come confidentially and speak freely about anything.

Vermont NPR

State Will Look For PFOA Contamination Beyond North Bennington

By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN • 15 HOURS AGO

Brian Phillips does a water test in North Bennington. The state says it will test water around the state near suspected sites that used PFOA in manufacturing.

Howard Weiss-Tisman / VPR

The state is conducting water tests on private wells in North Bennington following the discovery of the suspected carcinogen PFOA in five private wells. Now Vermont officials are setting their sights beyond North Bennington to see if the contaminant shows up in other water sources.

The chemical was used for decades before it was phased out, and it was potentially used all over the state.

Audio for this story will be posted by approximately 11 a.m. on Friday, March 11.

Alyssa Schuren, commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, says her department has been receiving calls from people who say there are other sites around the state that should be tested.

"We are right now making a plan for testing outside of North Bennington," she says.

The Warren Wire Company in Pownal manufactured teflon coated wire, and the factory is just one of the sites Vermont health and environmental officials are eyeing as they begin to investigate PFOA contamination around the state.

Schuren and her team have been pretty busy in North Bennington, tracking down every private well within a mile and a half of the former Chemfab factory, which is the suspected source of the dangerous chemical.

"You make these great things ... your stain-resistant carpets, your fancy waterproof gear ... But all of those things have to be made. This chemical is used in thousands of things." - Janet Foley, Bennington College professor

But there's a new challenge emerging, as state officials try to discover other sources of potential PFOA contamination.

"We are taking a few people and looking into other industries that may have created similar type products," Schuren says. "We're going to track down every lead ... We're going to work proactively to pull together a list of other industries where we might find these chemicals. And then we're going to do some sampling in those areas as well."

PFOA was extremely useful; it allowed companies to apply a variety of different chemicals to surfaces. It was used in firefighting foam, and to put teflon on cooking utensils, waterproof materials on Gore-Tex and flame retardants on to carpet and clothing.

DEC Commissioner Alyssa Schuren speaks at a meeting in North Bennington. Schuren says the department is already looking at other potential sources of PFOA across the state.

Credit Howard Weiss-Tisman / VPR

At Chemfab in North Bennington, it was used to apply protective coatings onto fabric.

Janet Foley is a chemistry professor at Bennington College, and she says PFOA was widely used because after the application process was complete, the PFOA simply went up smokestacks or was washed down sinks.

And she says the wide ranging applications of PFOA mean it will likely turn up across Vermont and the rest of the country.

"You make these great things. You know, you make your stain-resistant carpets, your fancy waterproof gear, and everyone loves that," Foley says. "But all of those things have to be made. This chemical is used in thousands of things."

When scientists discovered that PFOA might be a carcinogen, the EPA tested public water supplies around the country.

"We need to know how to focus our resources on where we suspect problems might be. We need to figure out where PFOA was, and begin to ask lots of questions around those sites." - David Bond, Center for the Advancement of Public Action

Between 2013 and 2015, public water supplies were tested in Bennington, Barre City, Brattleboro, Burlington, Jay Peak Basin Complex, Lyndonville, Rutland City, Shaftsbury, South Burlington and Winhall Stratton Fire District 1. PFOA wasn't detected in any of the systems.

David Bond, the associate director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action at Bennington College, says the situation in North Bennington highlights just how challenging it will be to conduct statewide water safety tests.

"It's an impossible task," says Bond. "We need smarter maps. We need to know how to focus our resources on where we suspect problems might be, and a better sort of regime of tests and questions for those sites in a focused way. We haven't done that up to this point. This is one of those things we're beginning to learn, is that, figure out where PFOA was, and begin to ask lots of questions around those sites."

Small manufacturers come and go, and they can leave behind a toxic legacy.

The chemical remains hidden in the soil and water. And as soon as the situation stabilizes in North Bennington, the state says it's going to start looking for it.

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